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OKEHAMPTON RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

1945

PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF :

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J. D. H. HOWELL

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MR. CHAIRMAN AND COUNCILLORS,

I beg to submit my annual report for the year 1945. It is still an abbreviated war-time edition.

The general health of the district remained good throughout the year. Apart from a limited outbreak of measles the exanthemata were not much in evidence.

The number of births was somewhat greater than in pre-war years. The deaths also were slightly increased. Heart disease and cancer as usual head the cause of death. The majority of people live to a ripe age as will be seen from the table of age at death.

SECTION A

GENERAL STATISTICS

AREA (in acres)	132,514
POPULATION mid-1945	12,420
INHABITED HOUSES	4,200
RATEABLE VALUE	£52,986
PRODUCT OF PENNY RATE	£219 6s. 6d.
LOAN DEBT	£115,300 16s. 9d.

VITAL STATISTICS

Live Births :—	M	F
Legitimate	80	76
Illegitimate	13	8
	—	—
	93	84
	—	—
Total		177
Birth rate per 1,000 residents	14.3	
England and Wales	16.1	
Still births	5	
Still birth rate	28.0	
England and Wales	0.46	

Deaths

The number of deaths registered from all causes were 165

Males	.....	82
Females	.....	83
Death rate	.....	13.2
England and Wales	.....	11.4
Deaths of infants under 1 year	.....	6
Infant mortality	.....	34
England and Wales	.....	46

The chief causes of death were :—

Infectious condition :—

Pulmonary tuberculosis	.....	1
Influenza	.....	1
Infantile diarrhoea	.....	1

Other causes :—

Cancer	.....	31
Diabetes	.....	4
Cerebral Hæmorrhage	.....	20
Heart disease	.....	52
Lung diseases	.....	13
Gastric ulcer	.....	2
Digestive diseases	.....	5
Nephritis	.....	6
Congenital causes	.....	4
Violent causes	.....	5
All other causes	.....	20

Total 165

AGE OF DEATH TABLE

<i>Age at death</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Infants under 1 year	4	2
1—4	1	1
5—14	2	0
15—24	1	1
25—34	2	2
35—44	2	3
45—54	4	4
55—64	9	3
65—74	20	21
75 and over	37	46
Totals	82	83

165

SECTION B

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF THE HEALTH SERVICES

The general provisions of the health services remain much the same as set out in my last full annual report (1938) with the exception of the section dealing with institutional provision for maternity accommodation. There is, at the present time, no public provision for lying-in cases, the lack of which is causing real hardship in many homes. It appears that whereas ample funds are available to educate the children, none are forthcoming to ease their way into the world. Although your Council is not responsible for this state of affairs these facts are mentioned as having a material effect on the people you represent.

SECTION C

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE AREA

A. *Water Supply.* With the passing of the North Devon Water Board Act the Council cease to be the water undertakers for the rural district. It is proposed to run trunk mains from Dartmoor through the district and tap them at intervals en route. This, when completed, will doubtless be a great boon. In the meantime a number of places are in urgent need of water.

B. *Rivers and Streams.* Pollution of water courses occurs at many places. The Council have employed consulting engineers to prepare schemes for sewage disposal at Chagford, Exbourne, North Tawton, and other sites are under consideration.

C. *Public Cleansing.* A scheme for scavenging the whole district has been adopted by the Council and should, when implemented, be a great improvement on the old piecemeal arrangements.

D. *Sanitary Inspection of Area.*

No. of houses inspected and defects rectified	305
Water supplies inspected	43
Visits re sewage disposal and drainage	46
Farms inspected and advice given re cowhouses and milk production (103 visits made)	60
Nuisances investigated and rectified through informal notices and persuasion	19
Water samples taken :— Public supply	5
Private supply	5
Houses disinfected and fumigated (including complete disinfection of Halwill Hospital)	12

E. *Shops.* Shops were visited and were found generally to be kept in a cleanly state.

F. *Schools.* The twenty-seven schools were visited regularly during the year. The premises are in several cases insanitary. None of them, not even those recently built, comply with the requirements of the new Education Act. No school had to be closed for infectious disease during the year, but many were put out of action by the severe frost in February and certificates were issued authorizing closure until the sanitary arrangements were working again.

SECTION D

HOUSING

As your Council know, it was not possible to proceed with any building during the year, but preliminary work was done in acquiring sites. A new sewer has been laid 120 yards at Drewsteignton in readiness for the erection of four Swedish houses. Sites have been selected at Chagford, Drewsteignton, Throwleigh, South Zeal, Sourton, North Tawton and Exbourne, and others are under consideration. The future housing policy will, of necessity, depend upon population trend, and in the opinion of your Medical Officer the factors leading to depopulation are in no manner less vigorous than when first brought to your notice ten years ago. In fact they are more potent when we consider that increased wages will lead to more mechanization and also that every child is about to receive a secondary education. One can guess that this latter event will render at least half the present rural cottages obsolete in the eyes of the rising generation. For these reasons the Council are recommended to concentrate their housing activities on the larger places where alone the modern conveniences, which will attract and hold the rural population, can be provided.

SECTION E

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD

Milk. There are about 200 cowkeepers and dairymen in the district and a variety of authorities are busy supervising them—Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Food, County Council inspectors, Milk Marketing Board and your own staff. In spite of all this activity your Medical Officer can find little improvement on the days when your Council was the sole authority, and in his opinion more progress would be made if the people on the spot were left alone to work on a long term policy adequately supported by your Council.

<i>Milk Samples</i>	<i>No. Taken</i>	<i>No. Passed</i>	<i>No. failed</i>
Accredited	17	12	5
T.T.	15	12	5
School Supply (Ordinary)	8	5	3
Ordinary retail	10	2	8

Of 400 samples taken for Standard Routine Milk Test :—

350 passed	(A)
60 doubtful	(B)
40 failed	(O)

Tavistock Slaughterhouse. The Tavistock Urban Council have authorized the inclusion of the subjoined table of inspection of meat at their abattoir in order that you may see the valuable service rendered by the Inspector to whose salary your Council subscribes :—

Meat Inspection.

	<i>Number of animals inspected</i>				
	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Cows</i>	<i>Pigs</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Sheep</i>
	2075	1352	272	1227	9765
Percentage of carcasses affected with Tuberculosis .....	.53%	3.47%	1.1%	.32%	—
Percentage of carcasses affected with diseases other than T.B. ....	.96%	5.02%	2.21%	1.79%	.84%
Percentage of organs affected with T.B.	3.85%	7.61%	6.99%	.08%	.01%
Percentage of organs affected with diseases other than T.B.	35.18%	37.5%	6.99%	.48%	7.59%
Total number of animals killed					14,691
Total number of carcasses condemned for T.B.					65
Total number of carcasses condemned for diseases other than tuberculosis					198
Total number affected with T.B. in some part or organ					203
Total number affected with disease other than T.B. in some part or organ					2003
					2469
					or 16.8% of total carcasses

SECTION F

PREVALANCE AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Your district was again fortunate in having a low incidence of infectious diseases. Measles assumed epidemic proportions in five parishes early in the year.

The following cases were notified by the practitioners :—

Measles	41 cases
Scarlet Fever	5 cases
Dysentery	12 cases
Pneumonia	9 cases
Whooping Cough	5 cases
Diphtheria	1 case

The single case of diphtheria occurred in a child who had not been immunised. The immunisation of children continued throughout the year, and the last return to the Ministry of Health revealed that 41% of children under five and 79% of school children had been protected against the disease.

OKEHAMPTON RURAL DISTRICT

INFECTIOUS DISEASES NOTIFIED FROM SCHOOLS—1945

	Measles	Mumps	Whoop'g Cough	Scarlet Fever	'Flu	Chicken Pox	Scabies	Impetigo	Ring- worm
Bratton Clovelly		3						
Bridestowe		2						I
Chagford	41							
Drewsteignton					I	I	I	7
Iddesleigh					7			
North Tawton	55				I			
Sampford Courtenay	6	7	3		I			
South Tawton	46							
Spreyton		6	3		I	I		
Whiddon Down	29		I					
Throwleigh					3		I	
Hatherleigh	I							
Germansweek							4	

Measles started in the spring at North Tawton. Then after a lapse of several months in the Chagford and South Tawton areas.

Tuberculosis. Nine fresh cases were notified during the year, of which seven were pulmonary.

At the end of the year 68 cases remained on the register made up of pulmonary Males 28, Females 28—non-pulmonary Males 5, Females 9. The average incidence of the diseases taken over a period of years is 1.3 per thousand persons. The war does not appear to have had any noticeable effect on this disease in your district.

In conclusion I would thank the Council for the ready hearing extended to me at all times.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE.

